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Does America Hate the Poor? The Other American Dilemma. John Tropman.

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John Tropman, *Does America Hate the Poor? The Other American Dilemma*. Westport, CT: Praegar Published, 1998. \$ 59.95 hard-cover.

After a period of neglect, research into the nature and causes of poverty is again being vigorously pursued by social scientists. Compared with the 1980s, when relatively few books on the subject were published, new material is becoming available with repetitive frequency. Much of this research has focused on the statistical correlates of poverty or on the life styles of poor people, particularly women. Much of it has been linked to policy developments in the field of welfare.

Tropman's book takes a different approach, stressing the cultural values and beliefs that shape attitudes towards the poor. His thesis is that most Americans hate the poor in the same way that they express hatred towards ethnic minorities, foreigners and other 'outsiders'. This hatred is culturally embedded in American society and a product of complex historical, psychological and sociological factors. The culture of 'poor hatred' also exerts a powerful influence in policy circles. While other industrial societies may be characterized as 'welfare states' because of their commitment to help the poor, America is an archetypal 'poorfare' state. Policies and programs directed at the poor have often been punitive and of limited effectiveness.

The author draws on opinion research undertaken during the 1960s and 1970s to support his contention. This was a time when social programs directed at the poor were expanding rapidly, and obviously had political support. However, the survey data show that most Americans did not support these programs and expressed negative attitudes towards those receiving aid. If attitudes were negative at that time, they are surely even more negative today.

Tropman believes that it is possible to initiate a process of value transformation that can change attitudes towards the poor. Through education, media campaigns and other activities, negative views about the poor can be replaced with positive, caring values. While few would be optimistic about the prospects of success, the book introduces a novel and interesting perspective on poverty in American society today.